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ABSTRACT

This essay presents an approach to substantial and long-range curriculum change in three stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation. Planning, to which three quarters of the paper is devoted, is defined as a deliberate, collaborative, continuous process of determining and providing for the most effective manner to implement a change. The most important components of this definition, discussed in depth, include (1) deliberative and determining, (2) collaborative, (3) future-oriented, and (4) structured/flexible. A planning model that includes implementation and evaluation is then outlined and discussed in seven sequential steps: (1) identification of the change, (2) formation of a support group, (3) assessment, (4) future awareness, (5) analysis, (6) action plans, and (7) evaluation. The evaluation process is threefold, consisting of, first, an evaluation of the whole planning process, then an evaluation of the change itself, and finally a formative evaluation for assessing future plans. (TE)

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An Effective Approach to Curriculum Change: Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation

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The curriculum change, which is the subject of this presentation, is not minor or incidental change, but substantial or long-range change. It is proper to understand curriculum as the total educational experience under the sponsorship of the school. As such, there are a number of changes that take place regularly. It is only the more substantial and long-range changes that are the subject of this presentation.

When the words "substantial" and "long-range" are brought into a conversation about curriculum change, there is an immediate suggestion of the need for process or procedure and we might add, a well-defined process or procedure. A number of curriculum changes that were based on sound ideas have failed because of the inadequacy of the process of implementation. If the process is not adequate, teachers might be ill-prepared to implement the change, or others, such as the board or parents, resist the change because it was not effectively communicated to them.

I offer you two thoughts:

1. If yours is a good idea and you are convinced of its value, take the time to implement it.
2. The more substantial the change, the more long-range the change, the more time you will need to implement the change.

The comprehensiveness of the process will depend on the nature of the change itself, the number of persons affected by the change, and the time into the future the change will affect. The "more" of each of the above, the more comprehensive the process of implementation should be.

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Planning

The most important and time consuming phase in bringing about curriculum change is the planning phase. This presentation is titled "Planning - Implementation - Evaluation". The fact is, that three-quarters of the presentation is devoted to planning because when the planning phase is carried out effectively, both the implementation and evaluation phases will follow more readily. If the planning phase is not dealt with adequately, the other phases could be ineffective.

This point must be stressed because we, as administrators, are often times doers, and doers want to get the task done. Planning requires forethought. Doers get a good idea and want to move with it. If doers get a good idea, they can't understand why others aren't as excited as they are about it and why others just won't move with it. Another reason for stressing the planning phase is related to leadership. It could very well happen that some of your staff generates an idea and they will want to move with it. The leader is aware that, if the rest of the staff is not brought to the same level of awareness and conviction of the idea, the idea will falter in implementation. It is our contention that people who are expected to implement a change will be ineffective in implementation unless there is a "buying into" the change. An effective process for bringing about change is a process that ultimately leads to a significant majority (consensus) of the people called to implement the change, actually buying into or assuming ownership of the change.

A. Definition - Planning is a deliberative, collaborative, continuous process of determining and providing for the most effective manner to implement a change. Some of the more important words of the definition include:

   1. Deliberative and determining: Both of these words are important. Deliberative suggests that there is thinking going on. There is research, investigation, assessment, and this leads to reflection and discussion. The process is a process that deliberates, seeks out information, reflects on the information and draws conclusions. The process determines and this implies

that decisions are made. In an effective planning process, the planners do not come together to merely discuss issues or the merits of issues. A planning process is intended to assist in making decisions that lead to action.

2. Collaborative: People are effected by the process and people should be involved in the process. Too many attempts to implement change have been frustrated because those who were intended to carry out the change never bought into the change to begin with. Or better still, the value of the change was never adequately marketed to the public. To speak about marketing with the value of a curriculum change might sound crass to some of you, but it means unless the people accept/buy into the change, unless they see the value of the change, many of the marvelous ideas educators have are going to be resisted. There is a significant amount of research that suggests that whether a process is collaborative or not, might not make the process bad or good in itself. However, in the case of implementing long or substantial curriculum change, it is only when a process is more collaborative than not that the change will be effectively implemented.

3. Future Oriented: The principle that is operative here is that planning is for something to be implemented in the future. And, if planning is for the future, there should be awareness of the future in which the change is to be implemented. One can learn from the past, but it is only the future for which one plans. If a particular change is to be implemented at a time in the future, it would be well to consider what will that time in the future be like? How will it influence the change itself, or better still, will the change have some influence on that future time?

4. Structured/Flexible: As was suggested at the outset, the process itself must be a structured process. It must be a process that is composed of sequential steps. Step one preceeding step two, step two preceeding step

three, etc. The importance of structure is that it leads from a beginning to an end with some sequence of action. However, this structure must also be flexible, and flexible to the degree that, in the event that something occurs that suggests the process should be altered, then that suggestion should be at least explored, if not followed. Any planning process, if it is to be effective, must also be a learning process. And there must be a willingness to learn from the process to the degree that if, in carrying out a process, new ideas are suggested, new alternatives suggested, they should be pursued.

B. A Planning Model - The process of planning for curriculum change can take on a variety of steps; a variety of individuals could offer a variety of models. I will offer you a proposed model and I do not suggest it is the last word in planning, nor the best word in planning. It is a model that includes some basic principles of planning, but it too should be viewed as flexible and adaptable. Those of you who have studied planning, or have studied decision making in general will see a number of similarities between what you already know and what is being suggested. This model is to a large extent, a model that derives principle of decision making and planning and the experience of actually implementing curriculum change. The model is composed of seven sequential steps:

1. Identification of the Change
2. Formation of a Support Group
3. Assessment
4. Future Awareness
5. Analysis
6. Action Plans
7. Evaluation

Before we discuss this model, remember some of the issues raised at the beginning of this talk. The comprehensiveness of the planning process will depend to a large extent on how substantial the proposed change is or how long-range the proposed change is. If the change is minor, the sequential steps of the model might be followed in a less comprehensive way. If the change is major, the process might take considerable more time than if it is minor. In any event, if the proposed curriculum change falls into the category of being substantial or long-range, some thought should be given to each of the steps of the model.

Step 1 - Identification of the Change: The actual identification of the change might sound unnecessary because it seems self-evident. Some might feel that if I am about to embark on a process to implement change, I certainly know what the change is. However, it is very important that prior to implementing any curriculum change, the change must be specified and articulated. What is it that I really want to do? Be clear and specific. The more specific you are and the more clearly you explain the desired change, the better you can bring others to its understanding. There is a further leadership related issue. The more you delve into the change to specify and clarify, the better you will understand it and become more convinced of its value. The leader must both understand the change and be convinced of its value before effective leadership can be offered in planning and implementation. Understanding the change means that I know what the research suggests in support of the change. I know why it is important to the school. Further, I have at my disposal the resources, research and evidence that can be communicated to others as they are brought to a level of understanding the change. Being convinced of the change suggests it has entered my value system. And value means that I am convinced of its importance, and its importance to the school, and to the teachers and the students in the school. If change is being implemented simply because one has been told to do so or because it is the "in" thing to do, then one is probably not going to be too convincing in trying to

assist others to value the change. It is a well known fact that one will be most successful in providing leadership in those areas which are of importance to the person and in those matters which a person truly values.

Step 2 - Establish A Support Group: This group might very well take the form of a committee of four, five, six, or seven people, but it is more than a committee to carry out the work. It is in effect, as it was described, a support group. One of the purposes of the group is that it provides the opportunity for the Initial step in collaboration. As the process is carried out, it is assumed that the leader has some ideas in mind, understands and values these ideas, and now is going to embark upon a course that will allow the leader to implement the ideas. The support group might very well be viewed as the first public to which the leader is going to bring the possible changes. It could very well be said, if the idea cannot be sold to the support group, it will not be sold to a broader audience. The support group provides another function in that it can help the leader develop procedures and strategies that will assist in the implementation of the change. Finally, the support group is just that. If this group is brought to a level of understanding and conviction, it will value the change and support the leader in implementation. The size of the support group depends very much on the size of the school itself and the nature of the change. If the school is a small school, and has only an additional three or four faculty members, then the support group may very well be another person. On the other hand, if it's a much larger school with a faculty of sixty, seventy, or a hundred people, then that support group may be much larger and could be the curriculum committee of the school. The nature of the change is also to be kept in mind because, if the change is far more comprehensive and long-range in nature, it very well might be important that the support group be selected with that in mind. It might include representative persons or persons who will bring in a

variety of ideas. The support group should be brought to the same level of understanding and valuing that the leader has. As was suggested before, the support group is the first group that the leader collaborates with in order to bring about the decision. And, if it is the ultimate goal of the leader to bring people to a level of valuing the change so that it might be implemented effectively, then it is the support group that is first brought to that level.

Step 3 - Assessment: As you continue to plan, it next becomes important that assessment is fact finding and data gathering. Without some assessment, one acts blindly. Initially, one must decide what type of information is necessary in order to effectively carry out the change. What type of questions must be answered? What type of data needs to be gathered? These questions must be asked first because time and energy could be wasted in gathering facts and figures that are not necessary in bringing about the change. Do only what is necesary. You might ask questions such as: How up-dated or contemporary is the faculty? Where is the faculty in terms of their attitudes? Or, Where are the board, pastor and parents relative to change? If the answers to these questions are important, then data must be gathered to provide the answers. Some questions could very well be answered by simply having the support group share their own knowledge or experiences. However, it might be necessary to do some in-depth study in order to secure the answers. However, first ask the questions: Is this information necessary? And, What will it give us? If there is a doubt about the necessity of the data, go a step further and test some possible answers to see if they can provide the necessary information and what it will add to the deliberations. Ask: What will it add to our process? An assessment phase is essential to planning because it insures that one is not simply acting upon opinions, hypothesis, and mis-information. If a member of the support group believes that there needs to be an attitudinal change, it should be

demonstrated that present attitudes are this or that so they can be addressed.

Step 4 - Future Awareness: Any planning that is not responsive to the future could very well be ineffective or irrelevant to the future. As was suggested at the outset, the planning that is being done now is going to take place in the future. One learns from the past, but it is only the future for which one plans. The changes that are now being proposed will be operative in the next two, five, or ten years. And somewhere in the process, as one considers how these changes are to be implemented, it is also important to consider the type of environment or society in which the changes will be operative. Unless one has some sense of the societies of the late 80's, early 90's or the year 2,000, one will be missing an important segment of planning. Again, the depth or the comprehensiveness of the future awareness will depend upon the nature of the change and what segment of the future it will affect or be affected by. For example, if the change being implemented calls for variety in teaching styles, and if this variety in teaching styles will be demanding of more money or different types of facilities, it's important that money is taken into consideration and that the facility enters into planning. What are the future contingencies that could affect the implementation of the change? It is a mistake to prepare people for change by changing attitudes and values and then, when they are brought to the awareness and the level of necessary conviction, they are informed that there are external circumstances that prevent the effective implementation of the change. Finally, some future awareness could be quite instrumental in bringing people to the awareness of the necessity of change. A future society might demand new approaches, techniques and programs.

Step 5 - Analysis: Analysis means that one looks at what has been gathered thus far in terms of the nature of the change, the assessment that has gone into preparing for the change, and the reference to the future and brings this together

to ask the question: What does this tell us? What does it tell us about the people, the programs, the change, and the future? This leads to a most important question: What are some of the conclusions that I can draw? This is the real question that needs to be answered: What are the conclusions that I can draw? The process is a process of study and reflection. It is a time to bring together the support group to reflect, to discuss, to talk. It might be a time to bring in some other people to reflect, study, and discuss. It is important that you begin to draw the very concrete, practical conclusions. Again, the more specific, the more concrete the conclusion, the more readily you will be able to address them in terms of actions to be taken.

Step 6 - Action Plans: If the analysis has been adequate, there will be a number of concrete practical conclusions. And, if the analysis has been adequate, these conclusions will give rise to manageable tasks. These tasks very well might be challenging, but they will be concrete and they can be addressed. It is important to realize that the broad challenge of the change can be separated into more manageable tasks that will eventually effect the change. The challenge of a broad change might seem impossible. Its parts are more easily addressed. It might also become apparent that some of the tasks cannot be done, and some others will take longer. It might take three, four, or five years to complete the whole implementation process. Action plans are developed to address the conclusions that have been drawn from the analysis. I remind you, we are now into the second part of this talk. We are into the implementation of the curriculum change. The implementation very well might require some preliminary steps of affecting awareness, affecting attitudes, and preparing people for change. That is just as much a part of the implementation as the actual carrying out of some of the tasks directly related to the change. In the implementation phase, action plans are designed that address the conclusions that result from the

analysis. The action plans should be specific. State the action to be taken and who will take it. State the time by which it is to be completed. The conclusions, arising from the analysis, focus the planning and give rise to the necessary action. The action plans are specifically designed to address the conclusions. If it has been determined that there is an attitude that needs to be addressed, then adopt actions that will address the attitude change. As the implementation (the action plans) is carried out, remember the importance of flexibility.

For example, as a particular procedure, to heighten the awareness of people relative to variety of teaching styles, is implemented, one might learn that what is being used to heighten that awareness is not the most effective way to do it and it needs to be altered. If the planning process has taught us something, we must be willing to learn from the planning process. Singleness of purpose in implementing the change is not the same as rigidity and close-mindedness. You should have singleness of purpose in order that the process be carried out effectively, but be open to learn from the process and its implementation.

SPECIAL NOTE: As planning is carried out and action plans are designed, communications and public relations become very important. A variety of people might be affected by this particular curriculum change. If teachers begin to adopt new methods, new techniques, new teaching styles and these have never been experienced in the school before, there is no question that there will be some reaction. This reaction could be positive, but it also could be negative. Don't assume anything about communication. For example, one might assume that the parents should know that this will benefit the child, or the pastor will welcome this change in the school. It might be very well at this time, to stop and consider communication and public relations. Identify the publics that

are going to be affected by the change and adopt strategies that will bring these publics into the change to the degree necessary. Again, this does not necessarily mean that everybody has to be involved in the planning process; however, a variety of publics can be brought into the planning process through communication by use of letters and newsletters, and inviting people to hear presentations on the change. For example, one very well might devote a particular parent meeting to an exploration of variety in teaching styles that they might better understand how this is going to help the individual student. If there is to be a change in your school that will affect the students and their learning, don't let a board or pastor, or parents learn about this second hand. Prepare them for it.

Step 7 - Evaluation: The final step in the model and the third part of this presentation is evaluation. As we all know, if goals and objectives are adequately prepared, if action plans are adequately prepared there is usually an element of evaluation contained therein. The evaluation that we talk about is threefold. There very well might be a need for an evaluation of the whole process. There is a second call for evaluation in the evaluation of the change itself. As the change is implemented, there should be specific criteria stated in the proposed change that will afford the criteria for evaluation. There should be criteria that suggests whether or not this particular change is a successful way to affect the student and learning. Finally, there is an aspect of evaluation that we often don't allude to and that is, evaluation that leads us further. The change takes us to a particular level. Where do we go with it now? Should it be implemented to the degree that it is presently being implemented? Or: Should we alter it as we move into the future? Questions such as these are evaluation questions and they too need to be answered

When we began this presentation, we suggested to you that curriculum change

needs to follow process if it is going to be effectively implemented. If the change is a good change, and if it is going to contribute to the school and the welfare of the students, it is worth taking the time to implement the change through planning, implementation and evaluation. The model that we suggested to you very well might need to be adapted to a particular situation, but, as we suggested at the onset, it is important that some procedure, procedure that includes sequential steps, needs to be followed. We offer this model to you, and the thoughts that accompany it, in hopes that they might assist you in being more effective in bringing about curriculum change in your schools.